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ABSTRACT

The Dartmouth/Rassias method of foreign language instruction, which is used in many American colleges and universities, has inspired much comment in the media. This annotated bibliography describes 17 books, articles, and monographs, as well as a film, which focus on the method. (JB)

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The Dartmouth/Rassias Method: An Annotated Bibliography

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Abstract

The Dartmouth method was developed at Dartmouth College during the 1960's. Since then it has received considerable attention from the media, significant support from the Exxon Educational Foundation, and has been adapted by some 58 colleges and universities in the U.S. as well as abroad.

This comprehensive bibliography provides annotated summaries of all articles and reports on the method to date. There are a total of eighteen entries including one film. Prior to the inclusion of summaries, a brief introduction to the method is provided.

One of the most striking features about the Rassias method is that so very little has actually been written about it. Although this technique of teaching foreign languages is used in over 58 colleges and universities throughout the United States, most of what is known about the Rassias method has been learned mainly by oral tradition. As a result, anyone trying to research it will have a very difficult time. Not only are written materials scarce, but they are scattered as well. For this reason, we have compiled the following annotated bibliography.

Another unusual aspect of the Rassias method is that what has been written about is has largely been in business and political publications. Oddly, foreign language journals have had almost nothing to say about it. For example, neither the Modern Language Journal, Hispania, the French Review, nor the Foreign Language Annals have published anything on it.* Although the Rassias method has attracted considerable attention from the public, the foreign language teaching profession as a whole has taken little notice of it. And yet, its appeal to the public is also distinct: it has not been in the traditionally commercial vein of attracting more students or more money. Instead, its dramatic, flamboyant, enthusiastic flavor seems to attract the public for its own sake.

The University of Denver, which utilizes the Rassias method in its foreign language program, has seen students progress rapidly under this method. The students exhibit

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*Shulz, Renate A. Options for Undergraduate Foreign Language Programs, Pub. by MLA, 1979, description of the program, pp. 30-36.

an unusual degree of facility in use of the language for first-year students. Their enthusiastic attitude is inspiring. Perhaps the best feature of all is the closeness and dedication that both teachers and students have exhibited.

As a technique, Rassias himself says that the method does not offer anything new, except for its vitality and an infusion of dramatic techniques. The classes are lively; the attitude of faculty and students quite good. In a survey conducted by Richard Brod of the institutions using the method, reports filed indicated praise for the method, its adaptability to their own colleges and universities, and the progress made by their students. The method's success definitely calls for more attention from the profession.

In conclusion, a more thorough study of the Dartmouth technique might be very beneficial to many in the profession. The method has obtained results; its vitality is notable. Although an eclectic approach may be appropriate in many foreign languages classes, aspects of the Rassias technique could greatly enhance and enliven any foreign language classroom. It is hoped that members of the profession will utilize this annotated bibliography in order to learn more about this exciting way of teaching a foreign language.

Luxenberg, Stan. "All the Class a Stage, Intensive Language Instruction." Change, 3 January 1978, pp. 30-33.

Use of the Rassias/Dartmouth technique has caused enrollment figures in foreign language classes at Dartmouth College to soar. From 1972-1973 to 1975-1976, the number of students in first-year Spanish increased from 203 to 225, in Italian from 44 to 75, in German from 201 to 280, and in French from 275 to 435. French majors have increased from 23 to 90 in the past ten years.

CEEB scores show improvement also. Scores on French I listening tests have gone from 504 to 550, in French II reading from 453 to 464.

The enthusiasm that students involved in the Dartmouth foreign language courses display carries over in to their other courses as well. In their history and science classes, they have been reported to be reading books and technical journals in foreign languages.

Former apprentice teachers report that instruction techniques learned can be carried over to other subjects. One math teacher uses drill techniques in his classes, and a doctor writes that he is more attuned to the emotional responses of his patients due to his training as an apprentice teacher at Dartmouth.

LaZere, Sonia. "What's New and Fun? The Dartmouth FL Method." PEALS 18 (November 1978): 20-21.

Dr. Charles Cook reports that the Rassias/Dartmouth technique has enjoyed great success at the University of Denver. There is no foreign language requirement there, but students elect to take foreign languages in the Dartmouth program in order to help them in their careers in law, economics, business, and political science.

A student's viewpoint on how the method works is also supplied. Mark Linne says that he feels his French class moves at such a rapid pace that it is impossible to daydream. He feels that he learned more in one quarter under the Dartmouth method than he did in two years in high school French. Because the class is so small, there are many group activities outside of class, such as visiting French restaurants and attending French movies. Linne feels that the closeness of the students adds tremendously to the learning experience.

"Parlez-Vous Francais? In His Class, You Will, in Ten Weeks." The Denver Post, 16 April 1978, Contempory Section, p. 10.

This Associated Press article by Terry Kirkpatrick, offers the most colorful and detailed explanation to be found about the dramatics of John Rassias. A particularly vivid example is the description of a war scene, in which Rassias creates a warlike atmosphere by turning out the lights in the classroom.

Rassias compares teaching to acting, both of which require total dedication to the audience. Some details of Rassias's boyhood as a Greek in a small, rough Greek neighborhood are given. Rassias later studied drama in Paris, but abandoned this study in favor of teaching.

At present, Rassias is writing his autobiography, a French grammar book, and is making plans for a video-tape language lab to enhance the Dartmouth technique.

Rassias, John A. New Dimensions in Language Training, the Dartmouth College Experiment. Washington, D.C.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 046 286, 1970.

This 12-page report begins with a brief autobiography of Rassias. Rassias earned his doctorate degree at the Universite of Dijon, where he was a Fulbright scholar. He was formerly the Chairman of the Foreign Language Department at the University of Bridgeport and has taught at Dartmouth College since 1964.

The evolution of foreign language study at Dartmouth College is traced from 1876 to the present. Rassias says that his priorities for teaching a foreign language are communication, cultural orientation, and literature. He has found such techniques as telephone calls in the foreign language, psychodrama, debates, and interviews to be very effective.

Rassias, John A. "Why We Must Change." Association of Department of Foreign Languages Bulletin (March, 1972): 9-13.

John Rassias writes of his frustration with the inadequacy of foreign language instruction in the U.S. He feels that vast amounts of money have been spent in innumerable ways to try to improve foreign language instruction with few positive results. Rassias believes that most professors convey an atmosphere of "sterile dignity" rather than the enthusiastic, spontaneous attitude so vital for the effective study of foreign languages. He calls for an upgrade in foreign language teaching and condemns universities for their poor choice of professors, who are often not fluent in the languages they teach and frequently unenthusiastic about their subject. The ideal teacher, in Rassias's opinion, is best represented by the image of the Emperor in Le Repos du Septieme Jour with the scars of leprosy on his face (representing the suffering and sins of the human race) but who has lips which are unscarred--representing the mouth of the teacher who is the vessel whereby truth and real communication are imparted. And this is Rassias's greatest hope--that the foreign language teacher be able to inspire meaningful communication in the classroom, which ultimately leads to a richer human experience for all.

Rassias, John A. "The Dartmouth Intensive Language Model." Hanover, New Hampshire, 1974. (Typewritten)

This 100-page model serves as a guideline for all teachers using the Dartmouth technique. Rassias reports that, after twenty weeks of study, students are scoring S-2+ on the Foreign Service Institute Proficiency Test. This score is usually attained only after one year's study and indicates that students are able to deal with limited social and professional situations confidently, although perhaps not yet with facility.

Rassias proposes two different schedules for study under this technique. One schedule is to hold the master class at 10:00 a.m., the drill sessions at 5:00 p.m., and the lab either one hour in the evening or early morning. The alternative schedule would be to hold the master class at 1:00 p.m., the drill session at 8:00 a.m. the next morning, and the lab one hour in the morning.

The model distinguishes between the responsibilities of the master teacher and the apprentice teacher. The master teacher introduces the lesson, designs the lesson plan, and supervises the apprentice teachers. The apprentice teachers, in turn, are responsible for reinforcing the day's lesson with rapid-fire drills.

A thorough description of the three-day workshop for training apprentice teachers is also provided. Professors from the Foreign Language Department conduct this seminar. At the end of the third day, candidates for the position of apprentice teacher are required to appear before a panel of professors to present a sample of their teaching abilities according to the Dartmouth technique. The panel then determines who performs the best, and that student is awarded the position of apprentice teacher for one quarter.

Rassias, John A. with Jaqueline de La Chapelle-Skubly. Le francais: depart-arrivee, Haper&Row, Publishers, Inc., to be published February, 1980.

In his preface, Rassias explains that his purpose is not to teach survival French or to prepare students to be tourists. Instead, he seeks to teach a student to communicate in French with another French-speaking person.

Rassias believes that there are five areas in which the student needs to be competent in order to really know a foreign language. They are, in order of importance: grammer, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and accent.

Rassias features several pedagogical techniques in his text including the use of coded learning, paced comprehension, illustrated usage, and micrologues.

Although this is a French text, the foreword is useful to all foreign language teachers. Many of the illustrations would also be useful to teachers of other foreign languages.

Rassias, John A. A Philosophy of Language Learning. Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College, 1967.

This 28-page booklet describes Rassias's philosophy about foreign language training for Peace Corps volunteers. It was written while Rassias was director of Peace Corps training program at Dartmouth and before the method was first applied to regular college foreign language students. Rassias emphasizes the importance of reality in the study of foreign languages; he seeks to make the classroom experience as true-to-life as possible. He also stresses that the study of foreign languages should not be undertaken simply to be able to speak or teach the language. The ideal reason, in his opinion, would be to pursue its study for the effect it will have upon the individual who is studying the language.

The good instructor should be supple and uninhibited and elicit a free response from his students. Rassias strongly encourages teachers to rotate in teaching various classes. He feels that the instructors become more objective, that there is less danger of over-confidence because of developing bad habits under one instructor, and that new presures keep all more alert.

The ultimate goal of the Peace Corps volunteer program is that the volunteers be able to truly share with the natives because of their intimate understanding of the foreign language.

U.S. Congress. House Representative Landgrebe speaking of quality of education, cites Professor John Rassias as outstanding educator., 28 March 1974. Congressional Record, vol. 120.

Landgrebe remarks that he regretted the recent debate held in the House about elementary and secondary education was far more concerned with the issue of money than with the quality of education. He cites John Rassias as an example of an outstanding educator because of his dyamic approach to teaching. Landgrebe includes an article about Rassias entitled, "In Language Teaching, a Call for Madness" to illustrate how exceptional John Rassias is in his approach to teaching foreign languages.

In the article, Rassias is described as a "whirlwind." Rassias manages to use a dramatic technique without sacrificing the quality of his teaching in any way. The Dartmouth method has spread to the Ivory Coast, Morrocco, and Micronesia.

THE DARTMOUTH INTENSIVE LANGUAGE MODEL (Association-Sterling Films, 1972)
Color, 16 mm, sound, 25 min.

This film offers an in-depth view of the process of training and selecting apprentice teachers at Dartmouth College. John Rassias narrates the film and appears as a model for the apprentice teachers (AT's) as they are learning the Dartmouth method. After the AT's are selected, the film shows how they progress in the first few days of teaching. There are several interviews with students and AT's. Both agree that this method is extremely demanding, but feel that the rewards merit the extraordinary amount of effort required from them.

This film may be ordered from The Rassias Foundation, 3426 W. Coulter Street, Philadelphia, PA 19129.

Bacon, Richard M.: "The Thunder and Lightning Professor" Yankee MAGAZINE, September, 1977, pp. 108-113, 200-205.

This article describes a typical day in the life of John Rassias, including lecturing in a course in modern French theater, meetings with students, addressing a group of alumni. A discussion of some of the thinking behind the various methods used in teaching.

Price, Jo-Ann: "Languages Get a New Accent at Dartmouth," New York Times, January 8, 1978.

This article discusses the philosophy behind the method and its techniques of implementation.

"A Touch of Class," Seventeen Magazine, p. 54, April 1979.

Reasons for studying a foreign language. "Lackluster teaching is the main reason students avoid studying foreign languages."

"Dartmouth's Student Cops," Time Magazine, p. 49, July 16, 1979.

A report on a special intensive Spanish language and culture program for New York City Transit Police.

Watkins, Beverly T.: "Will Using Drama to Teach Languages Lure More Students to the Classroom?", The Chronicle of Higher Education, page 3, January 7, 1980.

Remarks at a seminar on drama in the classroom at MLA meeting, San Francisco, December 30, 1979.

"Going through their emotions is the best way to reach students. This technique does not exclude the intellectual. It provides a platform so intellectualism can be effective. But you have to gain the students' attention first."

Rassias's autobiography, Breakthrough, will be published this year by Harper & Row.

Bien, Peter: Bien, Chrysanthi; and Rassias, John. Demotic Greek. Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1972.

The approach of this text combines both old and new techniques of teaching Modern Greek. It is traditional in that it is written and divided by chapters. The approach is new in terms of the total commitment it requires on the part of both students and teachers; its exceptional creativity is also new.

The authors caution that, upon completing this course in Greek, a student will be able to speak Greek and to read Greek literature, but that he might not be able to read Greek newspapers and many scholarly publications. The reason for this disparity is that there are two linguistic systems in Greek--the official language which is the written language (Puristic Greek) and the spoken language which is Demotic Greek.

This 286-page text, organized into 22 chapters, is so constructed that four chapters introduce new material, a fifth chapter reviews thoroughly what has been learned without introducing anything new, and two chapters (11 and 22) are used as "self-help" chapters. The book is well-organized and offers relevant illustrations, as well as a few guidelines on methodology.

Rassias, John A. Report to the ESSO Foundation on Two Years' Experimentation in Intensive Language Training at Dartmouth College. Washington D.C.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 061 841, 1970.

In this 109-page report, Rassias emphasizes that there is nothing new or original about the Dartmouth technique except for the vitality and vigor with which it is applied. He also stresses that, although the technique does emphasize oral fluency, it by no means does so at the cost of sacrificing good instruction in reading and writing.

The method seeks to avoid the "assembly line syndrome," in which students are mechanically educated and passed out of college into the job market without feeling that their education has been meaningful. The Dartmouth technique seeks to humanize the educational process.

Because teachers are enthusiastic and uninhibited, they elicit the same type of response from students. What results is good communication between students and teachers, better performance on the part of both, and a general feeling that the experience of teaching and learning a foreign language has been worthwhile.

The report ends with a commentary by Daniel Moors, one of Rassias's students, who feels that his experience with the technique has been richly rewarding. For Daniel, the experience was so meaningful that he believes it will affect his ability to relate well to others throughout his life.

Wood, David. "Dynamiting Language" Time, 16 August 1978, p. 56.

This article describes the success of the Rassias technique at Dartmouth College. Test administered at over 200 colleges in the United States prove that students at Dartmouth are more fluent after one year of foreign language study than 9/10 of the language majors at other colleges are upon graduation. The article does not state which standardized test was administered to students or report mean scores.

Rassias insists that all language teachers should be actors and firebrands. He maintains that they should leave class exhausted if they have really taught to their best ability. Rassias suggests that the method could be adapted to teach English to English-speaking people as well.